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DAYS AND NIGHTS OF JULIET

Juliet Man Ray

Interviewed by George M. Goodwin

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
Los Angeles

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: George M. Goodwin, freelance consultant, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., Art History, Lake Forest College; M.A., Art History, Columbia University; Ph.D., Art Education, Stanford University.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: The interview was conducted during a visit the interviewee made to the Beverly Hills, California, home of a friend.

Date: July 27, 1981.

Time of day, length of session, total number of recording hours: A single, afternoon session of about two hours resulted in one recorded hour of conversation.

Persons present during interview: Goodwin and Mrs. Man Ray.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

Goodwin first met Mrs. Man Ray at a party given by their mutual friend, James Byrnes.

In preparation for the interview, Goodwin reread Man Ray's autobiography, Self-Portrait (London: Andre Deutsch, 1963). He also reviewed Man Ray's exhibition catalogs.

Goodwin characterizes this as a very difficult interview. Mrs. Man Ray was nervous, chain-smoking, and several times asked that the tape recorder be turned off to give her time to catch her breath. She seemed still upset by her husband's death (November 18, 1976) and lost her composure while talking about him. She ultimately declined to continue the interview.

Her recollection was nonhistorical, according to Goodwin; she did not discuss her husband's work in an art historical context. While the interview was not successful in those terms, Goodwin felt it was somewhat more successful in personal terms.

During the session, Goodwin took photographs of Mrs. Man Ray.

EDITING:

Editing was done by Connie Bullock, editor, Oral History Program. She checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original recordings and edited for punctuation, spelling, paragraphing, and the verification of proper nouns. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed. Bullock also prepared the front matter and index.

Mrs. Man Ray, living in Paris, did not review the edited transcript.

The original recordings and edited transcript of the interview are in the University Archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent records of the University. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

JULY 27, 1981

GOODWIN: We're sitting in a home in Benedict Canyon, Beverly Hills, a lovely summer afternoon. First, Mrs. Man Ray, I'd like you to tell me something about your background and life before you met your husband.

MAN RAY: I lived in New York City. I was born New York, New York, as they say, and grew up there and became a dancer with Martha Graham. I met some artists in New York City who taught me a bit about dada and surrealism; and when I took a weekend trip from New York to L.A., 1940, I met Man Ray. [tape recorder turned off]

Well, being a dancer, I didn't know very much about art, painting or sculpture, objects or photography, but I saw the first painting of Man Ray at the Columbia University Museum, I think it was, and I fell in love with it. It was called The Rope Dancer Accompanies Herself with Her Shadows [1916], which I believe is now in the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Well anyway, the first weekend when I met Man Ray, he was there purely by accident. He escaped Paris during--when the Nazis came in. He stayed there awhile, but then he left. Being an American citizen he was allowed to leave. And some friend in New York was going out West and took him for a ride.

I knew this friend, and he said, "I know this artist who's very, very unhappy and would like to go take you out to dinner." And the first thing, when I met Man Ray, I was able to talk to him about Paul Eluard, the poet, about Marcel Duchamp, Tristan Tzara. I knew all about it because this friend of mine in New York talked to me at length about it. But I absolutely didn't know he was a photographer or did these marvelous photographs. And then when we talked, we walked up the boulevard here, and he took me for a row in Westlake Park. That same day we talked all about art. He was very happy, believe me. And then he said, I gave him the secret word. I don't know what the secret word was that I gave him, but the third day I was living--we were together.

And gradually we got a studio on Vine Street, a living quarter in the same building, and then he started to paint madly. He painted the Revolving Doors [1942], which had originally been just collages in 1916-17. He did the ten paintings in oil. Before he ever photographed me, he did drawings of me, which were quite wonderful. Then he told me he was a photographer. Actually he didn't. A friend of mine showed me a picture in a magazine, and that's how I knew. He wasn't very excited about his photography.

GOODWIN: He was just modest?

MAN RAY: No, he wasn't modest at all. It was just like a lithograph, one of the black and white, for his art.

Then he started photographing me quite a bit and painting me. He has lots of portraits and things of me, of that period in Hollywood. That was ten years he did a vast amount of painting and drawing, and he taught; he had some pupils here.

GOODWIN: Who were they?

MAN RAY: The only one I remember, I remember there was a waitress. Of course they paid for their-- She would come twice a week, she was very gifted. I don't know her name. Daisy I think her first name was. And then there was Florence Homolka for photography. And then there were a few producers' wives, who were able to pay a bit of money. In order to live.

GOODWIN: Which ones?

MAN RAY: Well, there was the wife of--oh, dear me--William Wyler. I think his wife, very beautiful woman. And various others I just don't remember. I remember he did--made a lot of chess sets, designed, and some of the lovely people who came to visit us. Ava Gardner and Hedy Lamarr played chess, and they would come and play chess. It was very lovely to see such beautiful women playing chess.

GOODWIN: Were you a chess player?

MAN RAY: No, he taught me how to play, and I played, but I never could get to the end game. It was always difficult. But I played, because you had nobody else to play with except twice a month, perhaps. Then a friend of ours called Bill

[William N.] Copley rented a firehouse, and he had a club. Friends would come to play chess and paint from the models. It was a very nice time.

GOODWIN: How did you meet Copley?

MAN RAY: Copley came, it was 1947, I believe. And he had just-- He was very much interested in having a gallery of art. And he had some money from his father. He had a friend called John Taylor, who knew art quite well. I mean he knew all about surrealism and dada; he knew those artists. So they started this gallery [Copley Galleries, Beverly Hills]. Man Ray gave them the names of Max Ernst, [Roberto Sebastian] Matta [Echaurren], the painter, Marcel Duchamp; and there were six exhibitions that Copley had.

GOODWIN: Cornell?

MAN RAY: Joseph Cornell, and I don't really remember. But anyway, after six, not a painting was sold to the Hollywood people; and Mr. Copley guaranteed each artist 20 percent of the exhibition, which was very good. And he, in exchange, received an important painting or sculpture. Then he closed down the gallery because nothing was sold. Stop a while. [tape recorder turned off]

GOODWIN: You'd mentioned that the Copley Gallery closed.

MAN RAY: Oh, yes, folded up. Oh, one person bought, I believe it was, a Max Ernst and never, never came to call for it. When he bought it, he was stone drunk; and when the gallery was closing, Bill searched out for him, and he

never even remembered that he bought this painting. But Copley gave it to him anyway. He was a big steel man, whose name I don't remember. It doesn't make any difference. I don't know what happened.

Oh, I think in 1944 there was some interest in a modern museum here in Los Angeles, here in Los Angeles [Circle Gallery]. And that was rather interesting. They gave, had an exhibition of objects [1946]. He made all these--now where's my book here?--objects which he called Objects of My Affection. There were no paintings on the wall. In the middle of the gallery they put, maybe, sort of a pool table and a steering wheel, which moved on springs and looked very erotic, like a man's sex, that went back and forth [Auto-Mobile, 1945]. You could push this table, and there were children who would come, and we told them, "Push the table, have fun, touch everything," which they did because the children loved it, all his objects. And the names of the objects were very interesting too. I'm finished for the moment. [tape recorder turned off]

Some of the--one of the objects was named The Sunkist. And why? Because it was the broken box, crisscrossed, of Sunkist oranges. But it looked very sad, for some reason. I loved it very much. And there was one called Abracadabra, with tiny little pieces of wood, just pieces of wood he would find in the studio or on the street, called It Moves Ever

So Little, because, when you shook it, it moved a tiny bit. And I just heard recently, this year, 1981, it was sold in London auction by somebody. So some of these objects that looked so delicate still exist.

GOODWIN: Do you remember the price?

MAN RAY: No, I didn't. I didn't get the catalog from Sotheby's to find out the price. One was called The Silent Harp [1944], which was on a tin can with a violin head and some broken strings attached. It just didn't move, it was just silent.

And of course there was Trompe l'Oeuf [1963], which was a photograph of an egg in a toilet seat.

And then there were many wonderful [examples] of those objects, which I said before were shown in this gallery, which as we were leaving California we just gave to some people or they were destroyed; he destroyed them.

There was quite a wonderful one called The Palet Table [Palettable, 1941] which he used to paint a picture on; and the legs were made out of baseball bats, but small baseball bats, children's baseball bats. And there was a hole in there to put a can of paint, and there was this lovely person, called Kate Steinitz, who wanted it madly, and she got it. Now it's in the museum here, County Museum [Los Angeles County Museum of Art]. I believe she left it in her will to the County Museum.

GOODWIN: What else seems memorable about the years you lived in Hollywood?

MAN RAY: Oh, yes, because we met so many [people]. There was a very good friend we met, Walter Arensberg, the collector. I met Walter and his wife, quite lovely. They lived right in Hollywood. And there was this man called "Allie" Lewin, Albert Lewin, who fell in love with Man Ray's work, with him, his personality, right away. And we went often to his house, and he bought some paintings, was given some paintings and drawings. Lewin lived in a house made by [Richard] Neutra, the modern architect. It's right on the beach of Santa Monica. And Lewin said afterward, when we met him in New York, after he retired from films, that Mae West bought his studio, and he was delighted that she was sitting naked in his shower.

There was an artist called Knud Merrild--he's from Denmark--who was very abstract at that period. He made cutouts, which nowadays most of the artists do but then was unusual. Very nice intellectual conversations.

There was a Czech artist called Antonin Heythum, who invented a class at Caltech [California Institute of Technology] on aesthetic design. We would see them every Sunday out in Pasadena [to] talk about all things. Of course [we] met all the European directors who were in Hollywood during the war years, [who had] emigrated, like Jean Renoir,

a very good friend.

GOODWIN: Why do you think the various Hollywood film people were so interested in Man Ray?

MAN RAY: Because they had heard his name. They were mostly Europeans, although there was a friend called Donald Freeder, who was sort of an agent, and who wanted to get Man Ray's work somehow into the industry. But they didn't hear of him; they never heard of him. And so Jean Renoir and also Al Lewin wanted him to be a principal actor in their films, but the producers said they'd never heard of him; they wouldn't allow it. But Lewin did get in his film, despite the producer, the chess set that Man Ray designed, very inventive, put it in Pandora and the Flying Dutchman. It was full screen. And also, of course, the photo of Ava Gardner that looked like a painting. It's in color, very beautiful. I keep saying, "very beautiful." It was very beautiful. Ask me some questions.

GOODWIN: OK. Did Man Ray enjoy the Hollywood people?

MAN RAY: Yes. He was so intelligent that he would do all the talking. They all wanted to hear about the twenties, (which is happening now again too), the twenties in Paris. They were not interested too much in what happened before. Because his paintings are in the modern museum he was always-- Except that they never got beyond 1918. He'd say, "I've done all these modern things, and as far as you--" But now

it's all settled since he's dead. They all accept it. He'd laugh if he heard.

GOODWIN: What kind of man was he when you met him?

MAN RAY: He was very sad because he just came out from the Nazi-- I have too many stories, I can't tell [all of them]. When he left Paris, got into Portugal, his companion on the train was another American called Thomson.

GOODWIN: Virgil?

MAN RAY: Virgil Thomson. And Virgil had all the music, he didn't have any clothes but he had music of all sorts--Germanic music, like Beethoven, Mozart--set in his trunks. And Man Ray only had a little, tiny suitcase with a dress suit, his pipes, couple of drawings, and the camera, which on the boat was stolen, his camera, so he didn't have the camera when he landed in America. The only interest he had in that camera is because he did some films, photos of his exhibits.

And on the way as he was going to Portugal, he stopped somehow in Marseilles, and Max Ernst was interned by the French at that moment. He gave him some money, and the French released him when they knew the Nazis were coming. After a while Max Ernst left for America with Peggy Guggenheim.

GOODWIN: Why did Man Ray come to Los Angeles, other than that he had a ride here?

MAN RAY: He had a ride to-- His intention was to go to the Pacific islands like Tahiti, to get away from it all, as

they say. But we met, so he stayed in California. My weekend was only in California, and I didn't go back to New York. And I didn't continue with my dancing.

GOODWIN: How old were you when you met him?

MAN RAY: About eighteen.

GOODWIN: And he was?

MAN RAY: Fifty, about fifty. It didn't matter, age didn't matter. Oh, I forgot to say I was living with him for about four or five years. I didn't believe in marriage.

GOODWIN: He didn't?

MAN RAY: I didn't.

GOODWIN: Did he?

MAN RAY: Yes. Then when Max Ernst used our residence to get married here in Los Angeles after his divorce from Peggy Guggenheim, he married--he was going to marry Dorothea Tanning, the painter, American painter. And they said, "You must be our witness."

So he [Man Ray] said, "Well, if you will be my witness, I'll be your witness."

And that's how my proposal of marriage [happened].

GOODWIN: How romantic.

MAN RAY: So we got married.

GOODWIN: Where were you married?

MAN RAY: Beverly Hills, we got married in Beverly Hills by a justice of the peace. And then Stendahl, various people, gave a party that day for us: [Earl] Stendahl, a collector

of pre-Columbian art, Walter Arensberg. We had champagne in all these places. We had a lovely time.

GOODWIN: Did you go away for a honeymoon?

MAN RAY: No, we didn't. It was [a] continuous honeymoon. Why should we go away? Max Ernst and Dorothea went back to-- They had a home in Arizona, and they left. We continued in Hollywood, and as he said--

Oh, Max Ernst made a great painting, painted a great big painting called Double Wedding in Beverly Hills, that's someplace in the world, I believe in Switzerland.

GOODWIN: Did your family approve of what you were doing?

MAN RAY: They were very liberal, my family.

GOODWIN: How come?

MAN RAY: You know, liberals are born, more or less. My family was liberal. They didn't know too much about it but knew everything was all right.

GOODWIN: Man Ray says very little about his--

MAN RAY: Family.

GOODWIN: Yeah, in the autobiography [Self Portrait, London: Andre Deutsch, 1963].

MAN RAY: Well, he didn't-- His family wasn't as liberal as my family. His family-- He left home when he was eighteen in order to paint, and of course he had to have some money to paint. He worked at an office doing maps, because he could draw very well. His family were very upset with him because he'd won a scholarship for architecture which he

didn't accept. Architecture is sort of a bourgeois-- Anybody could be an architect. Anyway, Man Ray didn't accept it; he only wanted to paint.

GOODWIN: How did his father earn a living?

MAN RAY: I don't know because he never talked about his family. I only met his sister.

GOODWIN: I think he had two sisters?

MAN RAY: He had two sisters, one called Elsie and one called Doe. Doe is still alive; she lives in Philadelphia. And his sister Elsie was marvelous; she saved him for years. His first gallery was called Daniel's [Daniel Gallery, New York], and then somehow Daniel went out of business, and they were all put in storage; but Elsie saved them from the storage and sent them on to Hollywood. That's how. And then, of course, the ones that were in Paris-- He left his studio complete, everything on the walls in Paris, just-- He had some friends protecting his things, who were living there. And when they got in the Resistance, they took everything out of his studio. The great big paintings they left at the color dealer called Maurice Foinet, the big paintings. He had a collection of paintings by various artists: Max Ernst, [Georges] Braque, [Joan] Miró. This little attic room was broken into--but he seemed to know who broke into it--so it could never be recuperated because it was sold during the war years.

GOODWIN: Did Man Ray also have a brother?

MAN RAY: Yes, yes, he had a brother. I think he was a poet, but I don't know anything about him because Man Ray never wanted to talk about his family to me, or to anybody.

GOODWIN: Well, it's the obvious question: about his name.

MAN RAY: As he said, it's a personal question, so leave it there.

GOODWIN: Did it have a meaning other than just the interesting sounds?

MAN RAY: The name was Ray, and his name was Man; so that was his name. And it sounds so wonderful.

GOODWIN: It sounds pleasant. Was he called by his friends both names?

MAN RAY: Both names, yes. I always called him Man, but all his old friends from before the war in Europe called him Man Ray.

GOODWIN: Did you like living in Los Angeles?

MAN RAY: Oh, I loved it. With him it was wonderful: exciting things happening every day, a new picture, a new idea. Conversation was terrific. Oh, that's when we met Henry Miller too in Hollywood.

GOODWIN: How did that happen?

MAN RAY: At a party. And then he would come every day, I think it was a year, the first year while we were in Hollywood. And he would come every other day or so with some very nice young friends called Margaret Neiman and Gilbert Neiman,

who was a poet, who translated from English into French very well. He did all the poems of Paul Eluard, Gilbert Neiman. It was very happy days.

GOODWIN: You lived on Vine Street?

MAN RAY: Oh, we lived in the heart of Vine Street, 1245 Vine Street, right across from a market [Hollywood Ranch Market] that was open twenty-four hours a day. If you were hungry, you could run across and get a frankfurter at three in the morning. And it still exists, I believe. [It was demolished in 1982.--Ed.]

GOODWIN: Were there other artists?

MAN RAY: No, there were no other artists in this building. Mostly bands would come to stay; it was sort of like a hotel. And our place was meublé, it was "furnished": the telephone. [And it was] very big, [with] the garden outside. It was sixty-five dollars a month.

GOODWIN: That's hard to believe. And how many rooms did you have?

MAN RAY: Oh, we had one bedroom upstairs, and downstairs we had a great big studio and another room off the studio. Then a few steps down there was the kitchen, and then there was another room, which he turned into a darkroom. And then we left when the landlord decided to double the rent. He said, "Well, it's time I moved to France." And he had a wonderful car, a Graham supercharger. He drove like a fiend, but he was a very good driver. We had it ten years, then

the landlord bought it. He wanted it.

Oh, my sister: I have a sister who had come to visit, and she was sort of his assistant when he went off to do a few photographic jobs. My sister Selma helped him and posed for him because she was very beautiful.

GOODWIN: Well, in Self Portrait Man Ray said that he had the three essentials of his life: he had a woman, a studio, and a car.

MAN RAY: That's it, that was it. And the car, I imagine, must exist somewhere because it's really one of those ancient, beautiful cars. A Cord body and it could get off very quickly. I didn't know how to drive. He didn't want me to drive.

GOODWIN: Why not?

MAN RAY: He wanted, as you say, a woman in the house. But I wasn't in the house. Because he had so many intellectual painters, actually he didn't want me to paint or photograph, [although] I did some photographing and painting, but not seriously.

GOODWIN: Well, by today's standards, would he be considered a chauvinist?

MAN RAY: No, most women liked him very much because he would give them an opportunity to talk, but I don't know, as a lover, maybe it's that way.

GOODWIN: He was a small man.

MAN RAY: Yes, he was the height of-- He was five foot four.

GOODWIN: That's about my height.

MAN RAY: Yes, but he was thin; so he looked smaller. Maybe it's five-three. No, he couldn't be, I was five-two. Five-four.

GOODWIN: And he seems to be a dapper dresser.

MAN RAY: Oh, he was always very well dressed, no matter what. Not what you could call Beau Brummel, but he always looked smart. Oh, he never wore-- When he arrived in Paris, he gave up all his ties because the guy who took him on this trip was a tie salesman, and he just couldn't stand it. And he just started to wear a shoestring on his shirt; I believe he was the very first one to do it, outside of the Texans.

I'm very moved, I must say, by this conversation because it's bringing back all my memories of that happy period. No rain. He had a barometer from France that always said beau temps: "My goodness, that's broken!" Now in Paris I have that barometer, and it's always down to rain, storm.

GOODWIN: So, it wasn't broken.

MAN RAY: No, it was never broken.

GOODWIN: Well, it seems difficult to characterize him as having one interest more than any other, whether he was a painter or photographer or a writer, philosopher.

MAN RAY: He was all that, all those. He loved to write, and this year, I believe in December, an Italian writer is coming out with a book of Man Ray's, all his writings and thoughts, which will be-- It's being published this year in Italy, but it'll be in three languages: English, French, and Italian.

GOODWIN: Looking over the autobiography again, I was surprised how well written it is.

MAN RAY: Oh, he just--he wrote that book in one sitting. He didn't change anything.

GOODWIN: Really?

MAN RAY: Nothing at all. In three months he wrote the book.

GOODWIN: It was written while you were in Spain?

MAN RAY: No, the book's last chapter. But he went to some-- It was very cold in our studio, and somebody-- In Paris [it was] very cold. And he had to fill this stove every day with masout oil. A friend of ours was leaving for three months, and she loaned us her little flat: very modern, very well heated. It was in Montmartre. On the same floor where we had this friend lived Victor Brauner, the surrealist painter. And that was very nice having a neighbor like that, an old friend of Man Ray's.

GOODWIN: Well, what particularly surprises me about the book, being a teacher, is its eloquence considering his, Man Ray's, formal education was so brief.

MAN RAY: Yes, he just went to high school. And then he got this scholarship. Oh, he had this professor there who taught him everything, taught him cartography, how to make maps--

GOODWIN: Right.

MAN RAY: --and architecture, gave him the full course, this young man who was very much interested. He loved this teacher, who was so very brilliant. And he would stay with him after class, and he would teach him when he was going to high school, and that's how he got his education. And afterwards, of course, when he went to the Art Students League, he went to a few others, [Ferrer] Center, wherever he could get a nude model to paint.

Otherwise his photography was self-taught. He took it up just to photograph his paintings, and he read directions in the film box, and that's how he started his photography. Then the first year when he came to Europe in 1921, all the artists wanted him to photograph their paintings because he got-- It was black and white, but he got the color, the feeling, the life of the paintings. Braque and Picasso were his first clients. There was, of course, [Jean] Cocteau, who introduced him to toute ce set, all these people who wanted their photos taken. He was taking their photos in the little hotel room. He would blow out the lights all the time in the hotel in Montparnasse.

GOODWIN: Well, is it possible to say that photography or painting was more important to him?

MAN RAY: I would say painting, yes.

GOODWIN: He considered himself fundamentally a painter?

MAN RAY: Right. Absolutely, absolutely.

GOODWIN: But it was through photography that he was able to earn a living.

MAN RAY: Yes, because his paintings weren't selling, his objects, no. And it wasn't such a big living until he started to do the photography. In between he would always be painting. He would photograph these rich people who would pay, and he photographed all the artists and writers for nothing, whose portraits exist now, forever, in every museum in the world. And when he started-- He stopped doing professional photography when he left Hollywood in 1951, only concentrated on his paintings and his objects and writing, and did photography just for some friends who wanted photographs, like Paul Eluard or Tristan Tzara, [Louis] Aragon, the poet.

GOODWIN: Was it very difficult for him to earn a living while you were living here? Was it a struggle?

MAN RAY: No, it was very simple. We didn't need clothes. I was always just with a pair of little shorts and anything I would put on, just wrap around something with a flower on it, a natural flower, and we would go to cocktail parties like that. And everybody thought I was quite a rich one.

The foods, the vegetables and fruits, we were more or less on a regime. We had cottage cheese, and I grilled things, very simply, not very-- Pure foods, one must say, which now everybody's doing. Then I was doing it because my mother taught me that too.

GOODWIN: Were you working while you lived here?

MAN RAY: No, I never worked. I was a model and I was dancing. I had to have all the time to dance, and being a model we were free to take a job or not.

GOODWIN: What was it like for you when you went to live in France?

MAN RAY: Oh, it was very exciting because I met all the people I'd heard about, the artists: André Breton, the poet and father of surrealism, Tristan Tzara, the father of dada. Except it was a little difficult: I didn't understand a word of French. I took a course there at one of the schools for three months, and I was not getting anywhere. Just the radio and just hearing all the time the French words, I got so I understood French; and I write and read in French now, though I always speak in English as much as I can.

GOODWIN: Where did you live when you first arrived in France?

MAN RAY: We couldn't find a studio, [it was] very difficult. We stayed in a hotel for three months. One day somebody

said, telephoned him and said, she heard there was a studio on Rue Férou, a loft practically, and the person wants to leave it. So he went every day. Nobody answered the doorbell. He put his card under the door, put the telephone number of the hotel [where] we were staying, and they telephoned the hotel and came there. It was ten meters high--I forgot what ten meters is--it's like a small church; it was that high. And March--when was it? March? April?--a warm day, he took it. But he couldn't take it right away because there was the key money involved. And they wanted this money immediately. Had nothing to do with the rent; the rent was very low. Then there was some rare-book dealer who took all his books in order just to give him this money quickly, and he took all these autographed books gratis, for nothing, as one would say. Oh, we had the studio from 1951 to--I still have it--1976 when Man Ray left this beautiful world.

You can ask me a lot of questions. Just this terrific thinking that I'm--

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

JULY 27, 1981

GOODWIN: Where are you living now in Paris?

MAN RAY: I live five minutes from the studio. I still have the studio on Rue Férou, which has all the paintings and works and files of Man Ray; and at least twice a week or three times a week I speak to art historians or people who are writing theses. And at the moment there's going to be a big retrospective in Paris at the Pompidou Museum [Centre Pompidou]--first week, it opens the twelfth of December--and we've been working on the catalog all winter, a very beautiful catalog.

GOODWIN: What will be in the show?

MAN RAY: Oh, there'll be about fifty paintings or sixty paintings, as many objects as they can find. They have to go to collectors and [get the] ones I have, drawings, books, photographs, about two hundred vintage prints. (Man said, "I was never a wine merchant, why is it called vintage?")

GOODWIN: He liked to clown around.

MAN RAY: He didn't clown, he's serious. His words were so interesting it would come out amusing because it's American. He was a real American even though he lived all these years in France. When he made anagrams and puns, many of his objects were sort of puns, I mean the titles, very amusing, his titles.

GOODWIN: Why did he live in France?

MAN RAY: Because when he first came he met all the dada, dadaist--he was a dada--and [found] the sympathy [for] his art. When he was at that period in America, he was treated as a dope fiend and a sex fiend.

So he had quite a few exhibitions at the Daniel Gallery, and his first show there at the Daniel Gallery was bought by one collector called Eddy, second name Eddy [Arthur Jerome Eddy]. But this man was about seventy-five or eighty years old, and his family couldn't understand this modern art that he was buying. But how it happened was very amusing because the show was over and not a thing was sold. And Man Ray was living in the heart of New Jersey, called Ridgefield, without a stove and without running water or toilets (no toilets, an outhouse), and he was really getting very tired living out that way. Because he did work; he went into New York--took two hours, Staten Island Ferry and various ways to get out there--[so] that he found this gallery, Daniel's. This Daniel was an ex-bartender, but he made enough money, and some poet told him he should open up an art gallery, which he did. One of the first shows [was] Man Ray. Nothing was sold at that first show, except this man came in, and [when] he looked at [it], he said, "Who is this?" And he turned around the paintings--I think there must have been about eight-- "Oh," he said, "I like these. I'd like to buy them. How much?" And he offered half the price.

And the gallery was so excited, they telephoned to the country, to a neighbor or something--there was no telephone at Man Ray's house--and he told him, he says, "You may--must do it."

"Well, it's half the price we decided."

"I won't take any commissions," said the gallery.

So those paintings were sold immediately, and Ray moved into New York. I think he got the old [William] Glackens studio. He painted Rope Dancer there, I think. It was a small studio, and he would bring it up to the ceiling all the time.

I have in my possession a small drawing of his ideal studio that he imagined, with paintings on the wall. But it's a very tiny watercolor, and I shall have it blown up so you can see. Those paintings that were done afterwards.

GOODWIN: Once he was living in France, he didn't have any interest in returning to the United States?

MAN RAY: Which times are you talking about?

GOODWIN: At any time. He was totally content living in his adopted country?

MAN RAY: Oh, yes, he was because, as I said, nobody questioned his artwork, and everybody wanted to be photographed by him (an honor).

Then he worked for Harper's [Bazaar] I think, or Vogue, in the twenties. He would go to New York; they would send him to New York to their studios, New York studios, to

photograph their models. No, he had no interest in leaving because all his friends were there.

GOODWIN: Well, when you were living in France after the war, what would he be doing on a typical day?

MAN RAY: Well, if it was winter, if it was eight degrees centigrade in the morning, I would get up with a fur, put a coat over me. He made some sort of a little shelter in our studio, because he built everything in there. It was one great big loft. He built a little kitchenette for me, and he built the toilet, bathroom, and with one other man he built a balcony so he could paint up on the balcony, which was nearer the skylights.

One of the first paintings he did there was called Skylight, a very large painting. Of course, the skylights were all mended with black cement, I believe. Now it's in a museum in Italy, that painting; Skylight: that's it.

So I would get up and make breakfast. I'd go out with a coat over me, freezing. We had a little burner, and I would make tea and coffee and toast, and I would put it on a tray and bring it back into bed--I would go back into bed too. So we had breakfast in bed every morning. Then I would get out of the bed, and he would rest, and he would draw or read in bed. He built certain things that would make it very convenient for him, that pulled out, and he was able to draw on this table while in bed. He built the lights around, very good lighting. We had an electric

blanket, [which] made it warm. He would read or draw, as I say; then he would gradually get up, and if he felt like it, he would start painting.

If not, if it was twelve or one [o'clock], we'd go out to have lunch in a little restaurant down the street. In the afternoon he would work again, or we would go to a museum. He was very much interested in the young artists, to see what's going on in this world. And then about--between five and seven we always received people [for] drinks and talk. People from all-- It must have been thousands of people I've met in my life here.

GOODWIN: Did you ever turn people away? Or everybody was welcome?

MAN RAY: Well, they would telephone. It depended on the mood one was in. If it was a good day, we said, "Come over." That's how it was. If he didn't feel well, of course I wouldn't receive them.

GOODWIN: Then you'd have dinner?

MAN RAY: Have dinner, yes. We'd either go out for dinner or to some people's houses or a party, cafe--always went to the cafe at night. Or a movie once in the week. We didn't have any television, went to movies.

GOODWIN: What kind of movies?

MAN RAY: Always, as he said, we went to a place where he could be comfortable. If the picture was boring, he'd go to sleep. But he was interested in films because in the

twenties he made about three films, four films, which were in the cinematheques.

GOODWIN: You would go see commercial films?

MAN RAY: Oh, commercial films, yes. He said there was always ten minutes in the film that would keep him, that was worth going to see the film. Ten minutes in every film of excitement.

GOODWIN: So you were nocturnal to a large extent.

MAN RAY: Yes, we never went to bed before twelve or one.

GOODWIN: How did your schedule vary in the warm weather?

MAN RAY: You know in Paris, the month of August, everybody leaves. [It's] empty, I mean for tourists. And friends who would have homes, let's say down [at] St. Tropez, the south of France, or Spain, Italy, we were always invited. And we would go. If he felt like it, we would go. We had one particular friend who would always send his private jet plane for us; so we didn't have to go to any trouble really. Everything was taken care of.

GOODWIN: Who was that?

MAN RAY: His name was Luciano Anselmino. He committed suicide since, after the death of Man Ray. He loved him like a father.

GOODWIN: Where'd you like to go on vacation?

MAN RAY: Oh, I loved to go anyplace where I could swim, near the sea; so that's where he would take me, [although]

he never went into the water.

When we went to Cadaqués in Spain, that was where [Salvador] Dali, right near where Dali, who was a friend of his, [lived].

And Marcel Duchamp wanted him very much to be near him. Marcel never went into the water. Neither did Man. They would talk and play chess. And Duchamp's wife [Alexina ("Teeny")] and me, Julie, we would go swimming.

GOODWIN: There's a wonderful photograph of you and Man Ray and the Picassos on the steps of Villa Californie.

MAN RAY: Ah, yes, that was in Cannes.

GOODWIN: What was it like visiting with Picasso?

MAN RAY: It was very simple, nice, because he was a friend. No problem. First thing, Picasso said he was doing a film, and he wanted Man Ray to help him on it. Man Ray gave him some suggestions, some tips, how to do the film. It's a sort of a film that he's painting a picture, Picasso, behind glass.

GOODWIN: Were there ever any jealousies or rivalries among the artists?

MAN RAY: Oh, no. Oh, I imagine [among some of them], but not the ones I met. I mean, not Picasso or Duchamp because they were friends. Man Ray always helped Marcel Duchamp in his mathematical experiences, with Duchamp's paintings. He was a very good mathematician, though he never had any formal education on mathematics, but he knew it very well.

He did a series of paintings called the Shakespearean Equations, but they're based on mathematical equations.

GOODWIN: Duchamp was his oldest friend.

MAN RAY: Yes, Marcel Duchamp. We were with him the day he died. Oh, he was fine. We had a marvelous dinner of pheasant and wine, and we talked until it was eleven-thirty at night, and Marcel was reading something very amusing, a French writer. And we left. We said good night, and Duchamp gave him his [Box in a] Valise again because the one he dedicated to Man when he first made it in New York was in Naomi and David Savage's house. So Duchamp went up and got this package which was the Valise, and we left to go home. And half an hour later his wife telephoned and said he passed away. But he didn't suffer. I mean, he was laughing.

GOODWIN: Did you enjoy Duchamp?

MAN RAY: Very much, because he spoke English, and I got every word of it. And even when he spoke French, I understood.

GOODWIN: What was he like to be around?

MAN RAY: Well, he was very-- You didn't meet him, hmm? He always talked. Like Man Ray, they talked, talked. If you weren't-- Of course, one wasn't up to their mentality. You listened. Question.

GOODWIN: Well, I have a feeling that, to some extent, words and ideas were more of Man Ray's media than perhaps even images.

MAN RAY: Oh, no. How can you say that?

GOODWIN: Just by the regularity of his conversations, his love of entertaining people.

MAN RAY: But he was always working, he was always painting, always making objects, as you know. You've seen them. He loved to paint. As he said, "When I start painting, it's like when other people drink, I become like drunk. I perspire all over." His passion was painting. Photography was easy for him, very easy. And his objects were part of his paintings. I mean he invented--his ideas were so varied. His paintings were all varied too. But if you look at them now all together, you can see it's done by one man. They all have different ideas. I don't want to be bored. Some painters, some artists, just make one painting their whole lifetime. Look at his painting! You're excited all the time, every one is different.

GOODWIN: What would you say was his philosophy?

MAN RAY: He had the words; I haven't got them. The pleasure of happiness, the pleasure of freedom. Happiness and freedom in his paintings.

GOODWIN: Did he have some disappointments? Were there things that bothered him? Annoyed him?

MAN RAY: There were a lot of things that annoyed him.

GOODWIN: What didn't he like?

MAN RAY: As he said, "For the experts, everything is impossible."

GOODWIN: He didn't like art historians or museum curators?

MAN RAY: Oh, he took them as they went, you know. Now, of course, all the art historians, all the thesis people, all those things, everybody wants to write about him.

GOODWIN: Right.

MAN RAY: Somehow they didn't understand at that moment when he was living and working. I don't know why they didn't understand, but they didn't.

GOODWIN: Did you come to Los Angeles for the exhibition in 1966?

MAN RAY: Oh, yes, we came in 1966 for the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art exhibition, October 25, 1966-Janaury 1, 1967]. Jules [Langsner] did the catalog. He would come to Paris all the time to pick out the paintings, you know, help pick out the paintings, objects. Then he did the catalog, and then we came to Los Angeles. It was a very exciting moment. And then there was a very good critic called Selts, I think.

GOODWIN: [Henry] Seldis.

MAN RAY: Seldis. He was quite wonderful, quite understanding. Man gave a talk to a couple of thousand people the first week, or the first two days rather, which there is--they took [it] down on tape--in the museum. And the show was, I believe, very successful.

GOODWIN: He was pleased?

MAN RAY: Yes. He was very pleased. How it was hung, and--Very pleased.

GOODWIN: Did he see the exhibition in New York in 1975?

MAN RAY: No, he didn't. But the same exhibition, more or less, came to London.

GOODWIN: Oh, yes.

MAN RAY: And we went to Rome for the show in Rome of that exhibition, which had more, because there were more collectors who didn't lend from Rome, but they lent for the Rome show. It was a very exciting show. We had a wonderful time.

We stayed in Rome ten days, and after that we went to the seaside for three weeks; and he had his seventy-fifth [eighty-fifth] birthday there. And the host had a cake made of the Priape [Presse-papier à Priape, 1920]--maybe the Iron with Tacks [Cadeau, 1921]. (That, [Priape], was another party.) A big, huge chocolate cake, all nails and chocolate and cream. Everybody liked it very much.

GOODWIN: Which works are among your favorites?

MAN RAY: I like very much the Le Beau Temps [1939]. It has five dreams in it. Huge, it's almost as big as The Lovers [Observation Time--The Lovers, 1932-34], the one with the lips. Le Beau Temps has five different styles in it. Each dream is a different style of painting, of his own paintings, type of painting. [It] will be in the exhibition in December, there in Paris.

Actually, I love all of it, no problem, especially one that's called Twenty Days and Nights of Juliet [1952].

It has forty paintings on a screen, a big screen. It had been a white screen that came with the studio, and he divided it in forty squares. I was away for twenty days; so he painted that picture, all those pictures, in the time I was away. I was surprised.

GOODWIN: Right. Are there some paintings you don't care for?

MAN RAY: No, I like them all because they're all different, all a different personality, they seem. Oh, that new series he started to do in 1958 called the Natural Paintings [Peinte Naturelle], which he didn't use brush to [do]; he just pushed them together, and sometimes he had to-- To one critic he said, "I sit on it." Of course, those didn't sell at all--until now, I mean. I've sold them all. You only have to duel with certain collectors, you know. If they wanted-- He said, "Once you have a picture, an object in your home, then you don't want to give it up. Then you start to love it and see what's in there."

GOODWIN: It seems that Italian collectors have been particularly interested.

MAN RAY: Yes, I don't understand. Absolutely. When he died, in all the front pages of Italy there was the story. Some of them had it in color, completely reproduced paintings and objects and photographs. Yes, I don't understand how they did-- The Italians look pretty good. They have Michelangelo and--

GOODWIN: As a matter of fact in the autobiography Man Ray says that Leonardo [da Vinci] was probably his favorite artist.

MAN RAY: Yes, Leonardo was. He didn't paint so many pictures. There might have been [others] which were destroyed somehow through the ages. But [of] the ones that still exist, he loved very much the painting of Leonardo called St. Anne [Virgin and Child with St. Anne, 1500].

GOODWIN: In the [Musée] Louvre?

MAN RAY: Yes, the Louvre.

GOODWIN: You've liked to go there?

MAN RAY: I go only when a visitor wants to go. Otherwise I don't. I go to the modern museums mostly.

GOODWIN: Well, you said that he was interested in young artists. What did he think of artists like [Andy] Warhol?

MAN RAY: Warhol came to paint him. He did it with-- What do you call those pictures that come right out of the camera?

GOODWIN: Polaroid?

MAN RAY: Polaroid. He did about fifty or sixty Polaroid pictures, Warhol, and then--well, you know how Warhol does his work. He said, "I like it. It makes me look young," It was a portrait of him. And then [David] Hockney, who lives here, sometimes, in California, also came to do a portrait of him [Man Ray, 1973].

GOODWIN: I wasn't aware of that.

MAN RAY: They have a lithograph in one of the galleries

here, the one in Venice, California [L.A. Louver Art Gallery]. I'm going to have lunch with him, Mr. [Peter] Gould.

GOODWIN: Did Man Ray like playing the role of a senior member of the avant-garde?

MAN RAY: I don't know. If the person reciprocated, they had lovely times together. And he said if somebody said something bad about him, "I'll spit in his face," in front of him. "They can say what they want to behind my back."

GOODWIN: Did he have any goals or expectations about the collection?

MAN RAY: We never talked about it. [He had] the natural expectations. Sometimes he hoped it would all go up in flames. But I'm sure he had a feeling, like other artists, that it should exist, which now it does. I don't know why you didn't write something down.

GOODWIN: I have a notebook full of notes.

MAN RAY: It would help me.

GOODWIN: Well, you're also visiting a relative who lives in Los Angeles?

MAN RAY: Yes, I'm staying with a relative of Man Ray, very distant.

GOODWIN: Uh-huh. And you have family here?

MAN RAY: I have a brother here and nephews who are in music. Very handsome California types.

GOODWIN: But do you still have relatives in the East?

MAN RAY: Yes, I have four brothers in the East, nephews, and Man Ray's niece, who I'm very close to, Naomi Savage, who's a photographer, and her husband, who's an architect, paints.

GOODWIN: In New York?

MAN RAY: In Princeton, New Jersey. And Man Ray's sister Doe is still living; she's in Philadelphia. I will see them all when I go back East.

GOODWIN: And you've been visiting the last few summers.

MAN RAY: Yes, last few years. My husband didn't like to travel really; so I never traveled. I never liked to leave him. We were together twenty-four hours a day.

GOODWIN: Thank you very much for being interviewed.

MAN RAY: A stupid interview, on my part, I'm sorry.

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